

CONTEMPLATING THE CROSS

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Text: "And sitting down they watched Him there"—Matthew 27: 36.

The cross is the cruelest instrument of torture known. The Romans used it, not only as an instrument of torture and death, but added disgrace. Because of this the Roman law forbade that any Roman citizen should ever be crucified. Probably, that is the reason why, while Peter was crucified, Paul was beheaded. Paul was a Roman citizen; Peter was not. This instrument of torture and of disgrace, Christ has turned into a symbol of great victory and endless glory.

"And sitting down they watched Him there." One can only wonder what was in their minds as they sat and watched Him there! Let us sit down and contemplate that awful scene. What do we see upon the Cross?

First of all, we see God's estimate of sin! It is written: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. 5:21). Christ, "made to be sin", endured the most terrible agonies that flesh and blood can know. Therefore sin must be a thing so terrible in the sight of the holy God, that no punishment is too great. Sin has broken every heart that's broken! Sin has dug every grave that has ever furrowed our

sod. Sin has brought upon this old earth every curse it knows. Let men think lightly of sin if they will. But go, look upon Golgotha's brow, and know what God thinks of sin! God ever beholds it as a rotting leprosy, devastating all the nations of the earth. Justice demands terrific punishment, as the Cross reveals.

We see on the Cross God's estimate of a man: It is written: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life." Of what value is man? What value does a Hitler, or a Stalin, or any of their ilk place upon flesh and blood? Little indeed! To further their unholy ambitions they stand ready to send hundreds and thousands and millions of boys and even girls into the jaws of agonizing death. Human life, with men is cheap; but, of what value is a man

to God? The Cross is the answer! Why dies the Lord of Glory there? He dies that **you**, a **man**, may be purchased for God's own possession —**saved**!

Contemplating the Cross of Christ convinces us that sin is a monster that would blot out of His Universe. Who dies on yonder Cross? The One called "Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace!" And Sin is the hideous something that sought to destroy God upon



that Cross. Either God must destroy sin, or sin will destroy God!

Again, we see upon the Cross the certain justice of God. Why did Jesus Christ die? We need to rid ourselves of the idea that Jesus Christ died a helpless martyr. While to the eyes of those who do not have understanding, Jesus Christ seemed the weakest of the weak, the most pitiful of all the pitied, yet as a matter of fact He was the Mightiest of the mighty, the most majestic of all the majesties! Listen to Him speak: "I lay down my life!.. No Man taketh it from Me! I have power to lay down my life! I have power to take it again!" (Cf. John 10:17, 18). The Roman soldiers, headed by Judas, came to take Jesus in Gethsemane. He arose, and with one glance of His eye, sent to the dust every soldier that carried a sword against Him that night! And, then He lifted them up as if to say: "I'll go with you! But you can't take Me! I lay down My life! No man taketh it from Me!" Yea, with one glance of His imperial eye Jesus Christ could have made all the imperial army of the mighty Caesar bite the dust.

As He stood before Pilate, Pilate said: "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, or power to set Thee free?" The mighty Son of God replied: "You have no power over me at all except it is given you from above!"

No! No! Christ was not a helpless martyr! Then why did He die? A lady of my church, Mrs. Leona Cole, has given the answer:

"Jew and Gentile, Scribe and Pharisee

Were in the mob that clamoured before the tree!

They followed up the hill, and did not know

That it was Love, not whips, that made Him go!

The soldiers, mid the howling rabble band
Made sure the spikes that tore His feet and hands;
Their exaltation pierced the murky air—
But it was Love, not nails, that held Him there."

Paul also gives the answer. Christ died "that He (God) might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

The fiat of God went out centuries before the Cross: "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die!**" That is simple justice, and God **must** be just! God cannot dispense His love nor mercy at the expense of His justice. Therefore the death of Jesus Christ was an absolute necessity in order that the demands of justice might be met.

Once again: On the Cross we see the fathomless goodness of God. Why is Jesus Christ dying? Because God is love and God is merciful and God is gracious; and in unmerited favor, His fathomless goodness is even permitting His Son to suffer and die that we might be saved. No wonder John cried: "God is love!" He is love in that He gave the utmost gift that a Father's heart could give. Behold it on yonder Cross!

Likewise, we see on the cross the real price of redemption. Peter declared it: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ "(I Pet. 1:18). Look upon yonder cross and tell us, is there any other offering that can match God's offering and prove to be acceptable? What measure of good works or of personal attainment, or of what we call culture or character, can ever equal the price which God demanded of Jesus Christ when He was "made to be sin for us"? As

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Jesus Christ hung upon the Cross, satanically inspired men called to Him: "Come down from the Cross and we will believe in you!" They knew not what they said!

"If from the Cross He had come down,

How strange it would have been,
To see the Christ with awful frown
Scatter His foes obscene.

The Pharisees had cowered then,
Nor any fresh sign craved
From the acknowledged King of
Men—

But would we have been saved?"

No! Our Lord was there to pay the price of redemption, and the price of redemption was the precious blood of Christ. There is no price to equal it. God pity the men who talk of being saved by their own personal righteousness! If good works or character could save, Christ by good works and by character would have paid the price. But no! "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Sinner, upon the Cross of Jesus Christ, what dost thou behold?

In the corner of a park at Fifth and Hill Streets, Los Angeles, we saw a cannon that had been captured from Spain in the Spanish-American war. This cannon had been through the wars of Napoleon. Back on the butt of this cannon, in molded letters of iron, is the Latin inscriptions: "**Ultima ratio regum**!" That means—"The last argument of Kings!"—How true it

is that when Kings cannot settle their disputes by word or pen, when reason is dethroned, cannon becomes their last argument. Cannon is the "**Ultima Ratio Regum**". But, listen sinner! Jesus Christ is the "**Ultima Ratio Reum**"! That is, **Jesus Christ** is the last argument of God! Shall the last solemn fiat of God, nailed upon yonder Cross, fail to convince you of the need of a Savior? If so, then the last argument of God is spent and His eternal wrath abides upon you forever! There is no other way—no other course! What is your answer to the last argument of God tonight?
